

PERFORMANCE-BASED DATA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2004

The Performance-Based Data Management Initiative (PBDMI) is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the States, local education agencies, and industry partners to improve the quality and timeliness of education information. The initiative will produce an Education Data Exchange Network (EDEN), providing States and the Federal government the capacity to transfer and analyze information about education programs. When fully implemented, EDEN will not only provide timely performance data to aid education decision makers but also streamline the data collection process and reduce the reporting burden.

PBDMI PARTNERSHIPS

Participation in the DSS Pilot: From November 17 through December 15, 2003, fifty (50) State Educational Agencies (SEAs), including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, participated in the Decision Support System (DSS) Pilot. Over 2,200 files were submitted to the DSS Pilot collection containing 63 different file types. The PBDMI system consists of 29 basic file types, some of which are applicable to all three levels: SEA, LEA, and school and some of which apply to only one or two levels, for a total of 70 files.

PBDMI is currently working with individual States to resolve their specific problems with submissions. The second submission phase will open again on February 23, 2004, to collect data in seven priority file types. The seven priority files are:

1. Directory – all levels (SEA, LEA, school)
2. Membership – all levels
3. Achievement – all levels
4. Federal Programs Offered - LEA only
5. Status – all levels
6. Assessment Tested – all levels
7. Not Assessment Tested – all levels

These priority file types provide the breadth of information that PBDMI needs to evaluate the submission process software and the changes made after the initial submission. Information on other file types may also be submitted, if the SEA wishes to do so.

Based on States' suggestions, some changes are:

- Error messages and e-mail messages will be more specific
- Examples will be included in the file format instructions
- Definitions of data elements and the business rules for them will be provided
- Larger files can be submitted
- More training will be provided

PBDMI would like to thank all of the SEAs for the exceptional efforts they made to make the DSS Pilot an effective and useful collection effort. Measured by how much we learned, the DSS Pilot was a very successful effort!

Providing Technical Assistance: Technical assistance will be available for all SEAs again during the second submission period. The Technical Assistance Contacts (TACs) will focus on the seven priority files and any problems the SEAs have with their submissions. Each PBDMI State Coordinator should contact their assigned TAC with any problems or questions they encounter during the second submission. Summaries of frequently asked questions, clarifications and solutions will be posted.

Providing Accurate and Timely Data on the Effectiveness of Educational Programs and Achievement Trends in America's Schools

EVALUATING THE TEST

On January 22 - 23, 2004 the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) organized a conference of the PBDMI State Coordinators to discuss the results of the DSS Pilot. Most of the 60+ representatives from 47 State education agencies participating in the conference found the meeting to be very useful.

At the conference, the coordinators identified issues and problems they experienced with the submission of data. These fell into a few basic categories:

Technical Assistance:

- A disconnect between the DSS Pilot file specifications and the output of tools used by the SEAs to create files,
- The capacity of the system was too low to accept the data files in the sizes commonly used by some of the State providers,
- Resolving errors was time consuming,
- The PBDMI-provided guidance did not cover some necessary issues, and
- Format changes created very tight timeframes for submitting data

Communications:

- Unforeseen technical problems with data transmissions put more demand than anticipated on customer service,
- Response time to questions was lengthy, and
- Both ED and the SEAs need additional performance metrics to monitor and manage files through the submission process.

PREPARING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

State Site Visits: Beginning in April 2004, PBDMI will address program finance data and common data elements for discretionary grants. ED officials will conduct another round of State site visits to determine the availability of this next level of data elements to be collected from the States.

Financial Data Elements: ED is in the process of identifying common financial data elements for the PBDMI phase II collection. The goal is to create a “common book of knowledge” which will assist the Federal Government in finding out how Federal

program money is allocated within the States. Since recent Federal regulation requires DUNS numbers for all recipients of federal grants and contracts, PBDMI has added DUNS numbers to the phase I pilot test data collection. Analysis is ongoing regarding the availability of financial data for Federal grant expenditures at the State and local school district levels.

Getting Ready for EDEN: ED has hired expert consultants to analyze its current internal business processes and develop guidance for a smooth transition from the current status quo to a desired future state, which includes an “EDEN-friendly” business environment.

EDEN also will contain a survey tool to collect needed data that is not part of the regularly scheduled annual collections. The requirements for the tool have been defined and selection of a survey instrument based on these requirements is underway. The tool will have its first trial in the fall with the 2004 Civil Rights data collection.

After EDEN is implemented in March 2005, we will be able to review the contents of the database to identify what data collections are redundant and can be eliminated in future years. The review of data collections would include collections for the 19 programs covered under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB), programs under IDEA, as well as collections required by any enacted legislation for Perkins.

Privacy: To protect the privacy of individuals when the data is made public, cell suppression of the data will be used by PBDMI to mask information when a count, or cell, contains a very low number or the entire population for that category.

MIS Conference: Information about the data collected in the first pilot submission and the resulting feedback will be shared at the 17th Annual MIS Conference, February 25 - 27, 2004 at the Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel and Waterfront Conference Center, Portsmouth, VA.

*For more information
please contact Patrick Sherrill
at pat.sherrill@ed.gov.*